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## SERMON CCCCXIX.

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### THE HOUR.\*

"Father! the hour is come."—JOHN, xvii. 1.

We cannot believe ourselves mistaken in maintaining that, although every religious service should be perfumed with the odour of Christ, the service which so distinctly and affectingly records his *death*, should with especial sacredness, be consecrated entirely to such thoughts as grow immediately out of that grand subject. Surely if at any time we are to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified, this is the time. Remoter topics however important in their place, would divide attention and exhaust a portion of the energy of thought and emotion, which the great duty of the occasion, requires and deserves. Then let the first and the last thought of the soul upon this day be—the love wherewith He loved us, who gave himself for us—the more especially as the appointment upon which we are to attend, comes with the emphasis of a special injunction, "*Do this in remembrance of me.*"

In this spirit, we have now, as upon all similar occasions, selected words from the pages of sacred scripture, which directly summon us into the very midst of the wonders we commemorate. We wish, not so much to reason as to feel: not to present truth in controversy, but truth admitted, and so to present it, as to draw our souls out of the range of their ordinary associations; and from the eminence which our subject alone affords, to contemplate the most momentous realities which human history presents to our view. Such a height is the historical period of the passion of the Redeemer of men: and to reach it, let all our energies of thought, attentive thought, excited and consecrated by the Divine Spirit, be given to the deep significance which belongs to the words of our text "Father! the hour is come."

\* A Communion Sermon.

Every word that drops from the lips of one who is upon the eve of some great revolution in his destiny, has a peculiar intensity; and hence every word of the most wonderful personage that ever appeared upon earth, deserves a separate attention. Viewed in this light, the words we have chosen are memorable, and will furnish meditations in harmony with the purpose to which we have dedicated this day.

It is a striking fact, that although the Redeemer in the last interviews he held with his disciples, and in the process of his arraignment and condemnation, refers in strong terms to the certainty and awfulness of the calamities he was to endure, he does not dwell upon them or even refer to them, as if for the purpose of conveying to his disciples distinct conceptions of the nature of the anticipated sufferings, or of the precise emotions with which he himself looked forward to them. We may believe indeed, that to his human nature, the precise amount and form of the trials to which his last moments were to be subjected, were unknown. To the *man* Christ Jesus, the prescience of the son of God did not necessarily belong. As the event proved, the burden of his agony—not bodily but mental—was such as to produce fearful effects; and no wonder, if, as we believe, that agony arose from the indescribable visitation of the curse due to the sins whose punishment in this mysterious form he agreed to bear. If this be so, it follows that the Saviour's anticipations of that suffering, must have been far short of the reality: for a full and clear anticipation of it, would have been equivalent to the reality. To know precisely what we may have to bear, is in fact a doubling of the pain: and in the case of the Redeemer, such a doubling of the pain, would have been unjust and impossible. Had he had a distinct apprehension not merely of the certainty, but of the precise emotions, the precise horrors which assaulted him at the moment when he cried out "My God, My God,—could he have had strength left to bear them as it were a second time.

This partly accounts for the fact, that he was at all able to turn away his attention from the anticipated suffering, the certainty, but not the full nature and degree of which he knew before-hand, and that between the bursts of his agony, he could deliver so much direction and consolation to others. And yet how terrific, though comparatively brief, were those periods of agony! Even the *anticipation*, we might suppose, would have so absorbed the soul of our Lord, as to have left no room for other thoughts. Every counsel he gave reminded him of the time; every prayer he then uttered had respect to it; on every side, he beheld remembrancers of the approaching conflict. With it in his view, he went into the very toils of his enemies, by going up to Jerusalem: with it in view, he sat down to the Passover; and during the progress of feast he was reminded of it, by seeing one of the little band

stealing away to sell his life. In the last conversation which took place in the upper chamber, many references are made to it and how affecting the allusions to the fact which occur throughout the prayer, when he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, "Father the hour is come."

And yet we should mistake did we suppose that when he refers (as he frequently does) to the approach of that hour, he thought of it only as a time of anguish, which could not be evaded or diminished. No, the expressions which he employs, clearly convey the idea, that, mingled with the over-shadowing darkness were gleams of a glorious light. Glory to his Father, to himself, and to his church, were ideas inseparably inwoven with the thought of suffering: so that as we cannot understand the wail of his sorrow or the exultation of his confidence, until we know *who* is the sufferer and *for what* are his sufferings—neither can we understand the trials or the triumphs of the hour, unless we view the one in the light of the other. When he refers, as he does in several instances, to the coming of *the* hour, these emotions of sorrow on the one hand, and of joy on the other, must have strangely mingled and crossed and affected each other. No passage brings this fact out more strongly than one you will find in John, 12: 27, 28.—"Now is my soul troubled,—and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour! But for this cause, came I unto this hour! Father glorify thy name." In these broken ejaculations, you have the key to the emotions of the Savior at least so far as to learn that he approached the last times of his mission, with a strange conflict, like that of one who knew that the crown however grand, must be preceded by the cross however heavy. Now joy, now agony of soul, in turns claimed the mastery. The depth of the one or the other cannot be sounded by any line of ours. But we may benefit our souls by contemplating, though at a distance, the exclusively singular experience of the Son of God, the man Christ Jesus, and try to imagine the nature of the emotions with which he cried "Father! the hour is come."

The hour is come! What hour? what causes contribute to make it worthy of being thus emphatically spoken of as '*the* hour?'

I. It was a marked hour in the chronicles of the universe—because it was to be signalized by events, *for which long preparation had been made*. It was long anticipated in heaven, long predicted on earth. The worlds were made in view of it. The foreseen apostacy of the race of man created the necessity for it. The long course of sin and wretchedness which Heaven endured, was endured because God would thus demonstrate the necessity for that merciful yet righteous interference, the crisis of which had now arrived. The dark hour which beheld the first pair expelled from the Paradise in which they had been placed was relieved of some of its darkness, by the anticipation of this hour in which God was

to glorify his Son and exalt him to be a Saviour of the fallen. Heaven was glad for it, and angels looked forth over the troubled abyss where human passions were raving and slaying their victims, to the distant glory which told them that sin should not always reign unto death, but should be overcome and finally banished by him who said "the hour is come." Its coming triumphs swelled the prophetic harmonies of David, Isaiah, and other seers: its sorrows were sung by them, in plaintive notes; for these holy men of old 'testified before hand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.' Even the wicked time-server was forced to tell of the star out of Jacob, which he should behold, but not nigh. Kings reigned and were overthrown, and kingdoms swayed and fell and rose in turn, in preparation for the hour which of all others, was to be considered as "the fulness of the times." That hour was then come—when Jesus Christ, the mysterious, the humble yet the mighty, the strong yet the weak, thus stood upon the earth—to teach, to suffer, to die, and to rise again!

II. "The hour is come," as *the hour of the powers of darkness*. So did Christ himself consider it. When his foes came out against him with weapons to take him, indignation at their cowardice broke forth in the exclamation—"be ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves? when I was with you daily in the temple, (*where* I could have appealed to all that I did no fault worthy even of rebuke) ye stretched forth no hands against me! But, as if recalling the fact that so it was permitted to be, he adds, "this is your hour, and the power of darkness." It was part of the work to be done and endured, that all things evil should be let loose upon the Son of man: evil friends, evil counsellors, evil religionists smiting in the name of God, and evil powers in dark places, with the god of this world at the head of the host, stimulating and encouraging all the others to defeat the Son of God. Could they tempt him to swerve—could they buy him by promise of worldly grandeur, or alarm him by worldly fears, and make him at last confess himself no more than man: could they stop his rebukes of sin, and his consolations for the troubled, and his pure teachings, all which threatened their long established dominion with an overthrow—how would they rejoice! The devils he cast out feared but hated him, and joined readily with infuriated men, to use the last argument of the persecutor—an ignominious death. They were permitted to work their will—because such an infliction (how far carried we cannot tell) was part of the burden which he came to bear, when he consented to endure the curse of the law.

In the temptation in the wilderness Satan was foiled. But malignity is never to be quieted however often defeated. The powers of darkness rejoiced as they beheld the toils which they had helped to weave, closing around the divine and powerful being, whose full object and the manner in which he purposed to accomplish it,

they probably did not comprehend. They knew enough to know that Christ's success would be their defeat; and hatred to him, and hatred to the world stimulated them to contend with him. Guilty beings! how little did they imagine that every blow they gave to the Son of God rebounded against their own dark empire—that every groan they extorted, was a rivet to their own chains and a severing of those in which they had helped to bind the world. The death of him they hated, was to crush the empire of the prince of the power of the air—the spirit that ruled in the hearts of the children of disobedience. Let them exult—'tis their *hour*! But only an hour. "The prince of this world cometh, said the Son of God, but hath nothing in me." "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out."

III. "The hour is come:" *the hour of terrible agonies to be endured*—foretold, foreknown, though not (as we have seen,) to their full extent; yet so far anticipated, as to fill the soul of the righteous sufferer with a dim mysterious horror even in the early parts of his history, and make him even then "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

But as we have already suggested, what were the anticipations to the reality? We often indulge a dread of imaginary evils—evils which may never happen—and how keen the sufferings endured in prospect of merely possible affliction, every one can tell who reviews his own history. But though our apprehensions at the approach of a dreaded trial may be agonizing; are they equal to the agony endured when we are actually in its grasp? It is indeed heart-rending to watch the ravages of disease in the person of a dear child; the failing pulse, the bloodless cheek and unconscious eye, which portend death. But still they are not death. When *that* comes, it brings a train of emotions, before which all previous sorrow seems light. It is the dread reality of evil, which slays the comforter, sweet hope. The hour is then come: all former hours of pain are absorbed into *that*. Now as our Divine Lord possessed all the sinless affections of our nature, he was exposed to the increased bitterness which must belong to those ills which are not merely to be feared as possible, but as certain. Let us then remark, *first*, that he had none of the alleviations of hope, so far as the absolute certainty of suffering was concerned. He foreknew it as *inevitable*. It must needs be. Power itself could not remove it; skill could not evade it; pity could not soften it. The cup was there: it was full: and he who had given his princely word to drink it, must drink it—or the curse was not borne, justice was not satisfied, and therefore pardon for the condemned was not possible. Nor could it be a sweeter cup than it was—*its bitterness could not be diluted*! for guilt mingled its ingredients.—Every thing in God's universe; heaven by its love, hell by its despair, the earth by its miseries; the heart by its blasted powers—all declare that sin can never be otherwise than a curse to all who come within its range. And as

the Redeemer of men, came expressly to bear our iniquities, and to be made a curse for them, he had not only a certainty of suffering, but of suffering that could not be modified. Remark again, that it was to be *incomparable*, as well as *inevitable*. It was more than *the body's torments*—they are sharp, but endurable, for martyrs sustained by love have proved superior to them : and so would He. It was more than *the torture of wounded dignity and conscious innocence*, subjected to infamous and degrading persecutions—that has been borne without extorting the cry, Father ! save me from this hour ! Let this cup pass from me ! It was not *the sorrow with which a view of the depravity of the world will affect a pure mind*: for that is a sorrow which none have a right to pray may be taken from them, and how can such a sorrow be supposed to justify the impassioned call, My God ! why hast thou forsaken me !—It was not the *fear of being triumphed over finally*—because He must have known at least the certainty that though bowed he should not be broken. It was not, finally, *an evil conscience*—none but a conscious deceiver could have been troubled by remorse for personal crimes ; and therefore, that cannot have been the cause of his agonies.

What were they then ? Ask heaven—heaven cannot tell ! not even he who bore the agonies can tell, because there are no terms in created language to convey them, even if there were powers to conceive them. Hell has no such sorrows as those—much less earth. For, let us remark, that here was a burden of guilt, laid upon the soul of one who was harmless of any guilt ! Here was an indefinable curse of God visiting the soul of the innocent ! All the sensibilities of an untainted purity were shocked to be thus set in array against God—a loving God, who though he loved, smote the Shepherd because he took the place of the sheep to expiate their offences. Oh ! had it been only man that was wreaking his malignant fury against him for the rebukes he had administered, or had it even been the united hosts of Hell, let loose to try their utmost power upon our holy Lord, though the suffering might have been severe, it could never approach in bitterness the mysterious horror which overwhelmed for a season the soul of the Son of God, when forgetting all other causes of grief, he mourned the desertion of the Father. That was the darkest moment of that dark hour ! All other causes of grief were but drops in the cup : this was its largest and most loathsome ingredient ! He had felt the treason of Judas, and the denial of Peter, the ignominy of his arrest, the bonds and scourgings and mockings. He had felt the grief of a mother who wept at the cross where he hung : he had felt for the scattered sheep whom he was to leave alone. But these were the least of his tribulations. It was the curse—the awful visitation which bore upon him as the surety of the guilty, and of which the desertion of the light of God's face was the result—it was this which signalized the time as peculiar in the annals of sorrow. This was the sword of justice, smiting

the man that was God's fellow! Sorrow like unto which there was never any sorrow, was that with which the Lord who loved him, afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger!

How long this peculiar form of agony endured, we cannot tell. Were they but *moments* when measured by the standard of human time, they were *ages* when measured by the amount of grief that was compressed into them. For who could suffer—who had the power to bear, or the capacity to feel, like the Son of God? A glorious being! originally in the very bosom of God; dear as the apple of the eye to the Father—the adored of Heaven; the spotless and faultless! It is He who is thus deserted of Heaven and Earth! He who is scorned as a deceiver, rejected by his people, and fallen into pagan hands, so low and poor, that even the robes he wore are forfeited and parted amongst his executioners! It is He whom all men feared to come and own at that hour! so that it was not until death had closed the scene, that one timid disciple supposing the watchful malignity of his destroyers to be mitigated by their success, summoned boldness enough to beg his body for burial. It is *He, the Son of God*, who foresaw and quailed before this array of sufferings, while yet future! He who endured them all, when the hour had come!

IV. "The hour is come." The *triumphs* of the hour are now to be viewed as consequent upon *its agonies*. This is the next of the senses which are attached to the memorable words, Father! the hour is come. *It was an hour, in which should be accomplished results which were full of glory.* As we have said, this prospect of triumph was the only thought that could render the prospect of anguish endurable by the soul of the Messiah. Suppose that our salvation could not have been secured but by the permanent sacrifice of the deliverer: that any being who could have mustered a benevolence sufficiently firm to become our atonement, must have consented to forego for ever, heaven and its happiness. I know the supposition is unreasonable and inconsistent with the justice and benevolence of God. But make it for a moment—and what being could have consented to undertake the work of Redemption, and moreover how large a portion of the joyfulness of the redeemed would have been destroyed, as they remembered that their friend was utterly lost for them. But no! God laid help upon one who was mighty, and who by his Divine endowments, sustained and qualified the pure humanity of his wonderful person, to endure the fearful passion of which we have spoken. When the tomb of Joseph shrouded that lifeless form within its dark precincts, it was but as a last, long pause before the great blow that was to break down the empire of evil. The *Son of God*, came forth a conqueror, from the grave into which the *son of man* had gone conquered. Then ended the hour of humiliation—and glory began.

This idea, that the work of humiliation was to be not only the

prelude but the very cause, of subsequent glory and triumph, is in various forms to be met with in the expressions of the Saviour himself. We learn from them that he considered it as *glorifying to God as God*: as *glorifying to the Messiah himself*: and as *glorifying to his people*. Let us consider each separately:—

1. The hour was *to glorify God as God*. For this the suffering Christ distinctly and ardently prays. "Father glorify thy name," is the final desire which seems to have tranquillized his agonized soul; for he utters it immediately after one of those periods of fearful anguish when he seemed to give way before the anticipation and cried "Father save me from this hour!" But no! glorify thyself! On the occasion of the departure of Judas, this thought seems to have filled and animated his soul—for this is his language when Judas had gone out: "Now is the son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him: and if God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." And still on another occasion, when he confidently declares in the full assurance of completing his work, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

And the meaning of this near conjunction between the sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow, is obvious enough to us. For by the awful violence of his sufferings and death, God's justice, God's law, and the evil of opposition to God's government, were magnified in the eyes of his universe. By the patient resoluteness with which they were borne, God's benevolence and mercy are equally glorified. Christ died that salvation for unnumbered beings might be bought, upon such terms and conditions, and with such results, as would exalt the character and vindicate and make attractive the dominion of his Father. All that earth has enjoyed of true peace and purity, as well as the fulness of joy with which the souls of the redeemed in heaven are filled, declare the glory of God; but as they are the fruits of the atonement only, by that only could God have been thus glorified before saints and angels. Well might the glory of the Father be justly claimed by the Son, as at once a motive and a reward of his work of humiliation; and the hour of darkness be borne for the sake of the hour of brightness which should follow it.

2. But the hour that was come, was also associated in the sufferer's thoughts with *glory to himself as Messiah*. "Father glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." The glory of the Father is shared by the Son, as God: but the glory of the Son as the Messiah, is peculiar. What advances the authority of God and magnifies his character generally in the eyes of men will be equally felt by Father, Son and Spirit. But it is for the Son of God alone that the peculiar glory is reserved, of having completed a mysterious and vast undertaking, under circumstances and with emotions which makes his experience unique. There is one Messiah only,

in all the universe, one only who bowed the heavens and came down, not to glorify himself by displaying the magnificence of the Creator, or the severities of the Judge, but to unite himself to frail humanity: one only who met and foiled as a man, the foes of man upon their own ground: one only who bore sin, and completed a perfect sacrifice for it: one only who had gone through the shame and horror of death, laid in the grave, and risen by his own might. His is a peculiar glory, akin to, but oh! how far surpassing, the glory of him who does good and achieves great results through the medium of his personal toil and suffering, and not merely by the easy exercise of power.

This was the joy set before him. For it he endured the cross, despising the shame! To reward it, he is now set down, God-man, at the right hand of God! The government has been laid upon his shoulders! All power in heaven and earth put at his disposal for the benefit of his people! All judgment committed to him! A right to give free pardons, and to visit by his Spirit, the abodes of guilt and sorrow, and make them happy! The peopling of Heaven—its songs of rejoicing—its unmeasured bliss, are the fruits of the travail of his soul, and he is satisfied. This is his glory! not “the glory which he had with the Father before the world was,” but the superadded and especial glory which crowns him as the Captain of *salvation*—the Prince of *Peace*. With these things before him he met the terrors of atonement, not without dismay but with resolution, and counted the cross his glory, because it was the means to an end, and saying in view of all its terrors, “*The hour is come when the Son of man shall be,*” not humbled, not bowed down and pierced,—that he might have said; but no, elated with the assurance of triumph, and swelling with the grand visions of a future which was to be crowded with results full of glory to God and salvation to his people, he looked at the hour of trouble, and beheld in its chaos the germs of holiness, order and peace, and said, “it is the hour when the son of man shall be *glorified*!”

3. It remains to consider it, as the hour of glory for his people. In the throng of interests which invested the hour with importance in the regards of Christ, did he forget his people? On the contrary, all he bore was for their sakes, and every word he utters shows how tender, faithful and constant was his remembrance of them. I lay down my life for you. Greater love hath no man than this. For you I give my flesh which is meat indeed, and my blood which is drink indeed. Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy, and your joy no man taketh from you. Peace I leave with you. I will send you another Comforter. For your sakes I sanctify (i.e. devote) myself. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world! But it is not necessary to exhibit the proof that his people were not

forgotten in that hour. This prayer, of which our text is the beginning, has for its burden, their welfare.

Now, how does the work of Christ *glorify* his people? How was the hour that was then come associated with benefit to them? With an answer to this question we now propose to conclude, trusting that it may arouse a train of salutary reflections.

To Christ's people that hour was the hour of triumph, because—

First, It brought them into a *glorious relation*. It gave them a Father. Say rather it made God a reconciled Father. By removing the obstructions which justice and law placed in the way, it made the throne no longer the seat of judgment only; but in the avenger of law, the redeemed could now behold a Father. It removed all collision between the paternal and judicial character of God, and destroyed the sinner's fear of wrath, by meeting wrath for him. Do we believe this, dear hearer? If we do, it cannot but fill our souls with filial peace, filial reverence, filial confidence, as we say with the simplicity of childhood, "My Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation." For the possibility of such a relation we are indebted to the work of our Lord. He made it possible to say, "I go to your Father and my Father"—"Our Father who art in Heaven." He is our Father because he is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," our surety. As our Creator and our Providence, he was ever a Father; but the Judge and the Father had conflicting claims, and these alone could be reconciled by Christ the Mediator.

And the benefits of this, who questions them? Lo! the broad promises which now pledge the interest, and power, and goodness, and wisdom of God for his people! None can pluck them out of our Fathers' hands: he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father. He will in no wise cast out those who come to him in Christ. But then no man cometh to the Father, but by him. See to it that all your reference to him, be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and then God ever our Father shall comfort your heart. He will send the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, as you sit here to remember what great things he hath done for you. Then fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom; and neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, can separate you from the love of God, which is *through* Christ Jesus our Lord.

What a glory is this for a guilty prodigal, to be met with embraces and honours like those with which our Father greets us here! Is it a small thing to have a seat at his table? And yet brethren, though now we are the sons of God, it doth not yet appear what we shall be. Happy are the privileges of seeing God our Father now by faith; but the experience of the most loving and favoured son whom God has ever blessed, so far from having exhausted the privileges of sonship, is in truth but as the dawn to the midday.

And all this we owe to him who has given us peace with God, and who stood lifting up his eyes to heaven, and said Father the hour is come! Holy Father, I plead by the sorrows of this hour, by the glory I had with thee, and which I have laid by—by the work I am about to complete, I plead with thee, Holy Father keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory. I say that the hour that witnessed such pleadings as these, was for us an hour of triumph.

Again, that hour was an hour of triumph to his people, because it gave them a *glorious condition*. It bought a new life.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, is a pledge of the resurrection of the bodies of his people. But that resurrection alone is not what is meant when we speak of the new life which Christ's atonement secures to them. We say *secures* to them, for we are not of those who say of the atonement that it did not secure the salvation of any. It did secure the pardon and the renewal of some surely, or else we must suppose that it did not satisfy the Divine justice. It bought not only the forgiveness of sin, but a new nature. The gift of the Holy Spirit, who *creates us anew* in Christ Jesus, is the fruit of the atonement, for while Christ wrought the work of salvation *for* us, it was in the full expectation and determination that his Spirit of truth whom the Father should send in his name, should work that salvation *in* us. He bought the right to shed benign light over the darkened sinner, and holy love over the rebellious sinner, and sweet comforts over the miserable sinner, and to lift the debased sinner from the dunghill, and set him clothed in his righteousness, among princes in the heavenly places.

Of this new condition, we are to consider that it has glorious *objects*. Not of the earth, earthly—but larger and higher than those for which men toil who are busied in securing what they may eat and what they may drink and wherewith they may be clothed. When we are interested in the soul, we feel that our cares for it however weighty, are not misapplied and will not be disappointed. Now, all that Christ did and suffered, if we believe in it, cannot but magnify the importance of the soul's interest. Its health, its peace, its vigour, its comforts, and finally its salvation, were the objects for which he died, and which to the believer in his death will come to surpass all other objects. I know that it requires a struggle to keep spiritual things before the mind, while this world appeals so fondly and constantly to our senses. But, to that struggle the redeemed must give themselves, and when they do, their reward is the present consciousness that they are nobly engaged, and the future happiness of reaping the fruit of their struggle, in a state of spiritual perfection. To live with God, and upon God—this is

to secure a likeness to God, and for this Christ met the hour of agony.

But when we talk of the *objects* which engage the soul in that new condition for which it is indebted to the work of Christ, let it not be forgotten that it is not for our own souls exclusively, but for the souls of others, that our efforts are demanded. The value we affix to our own spiritual well-being is a certain measure of the value we attach to the souls of our fellow-men. If we feel little for the first, we will care little for the last. No one therefore can presume that he has been changed by the Spirit of Christ, and become a partaker of the benefits of the work we have been describing, who does not show by the zeal and liberality with which he spends and is spent for others, that he sympathizes with the Redeemer in respect to the danger and the value of the souls of other men. To *work* for them, to *teach* them, to *suffer* for them, to *bear* with them, to *send the means of salvation* to them; these are among the glorious objects of the new condition to which Christ's love has brought them. And in aiming to secure these, we are elevated—we become enlarged, and are made like to Christ himself: for these are the fruits of the travail of his soul.

And finally, of this new condition, to which Christ raises his people, in virtue of the value of his death and sufferings, consider its glory in respect not only to its objects, but its *end*. Its end is fullness of joy at his right hand, and pleasures for evermore. I must pause here—for no one can grasp this mighty theme. Contrast, is the only means by which we can approximate to any befitting conceptions of the glory which is yet to be revealed. What this earth is, that, Heaven is not. Here, is sin—there, none. Whatever elevation the understanding can reach in this life, is little in comparison with the mental scope which belongs to the perfection of our being. Whatever dignity we may attain, however famed for greatness or goodness, there is an honour of surpassing majesty in reserve for us who have begun to walk by faith. We are mean at our highest estate upon earth, for the littleness of sin will still cleave to us; but the lowest seat in glory is high as heaven. So likewise none of our present joys, however pure, are without alloy, for they are crossed and thwarted by the sins of others or our own sins. But who can tell what joy is reserved for those who are to sit with Christ upon the throne which he has raised in heavenly places?

Remember this, that the nearest approach we can now make to the condition of perfect blessedness, is through the medium of sanctification. To become more holy is the only way in which we can enjoy heaven before we reach it. To conquer sin, to become superior to its charms, to find that we are growing more earnest in our detestation of its seductions, to feel resolved not to be its slaves in any form; this is a condition of the soul, which as it is the best

earnest of heaven, so it is its best foretaste. All knowledge of God that comes not through the practical medium of purity, is a vain knowledge. To understand some things, we must *be* them. To understand purity we must be pure. Such only can see God.

And now, dear brethren, what more shall I say? You are coming to testify that you believe these things. Happy are ye, if ye do them. If not in outward form only, but in spirit, you take your places here in the presence of Him who bore the pangs of the hour of atonement, in order that he might triumph over sin and death for you, you shall be conformed to his death. It is in vain that he endured the cross, so far as you are concerned, if you do not comprehend and feel that it is by a contrite and humble penitence—by a solemn and abiding reverence for law—by a deep and heart-affecting view of grace—by cherishing love to God and man, that you are to furnish evidence of being sharers in the grand results which he agonized to effect. Short of this you cannot know the love of God which passeth knowledge—you cannot benefit by this privilege.

The day which is to try all hearts is at hand; and to the mourning people of God, tempest-tossed and weary of sin, it shall be a day of triumph. Do you long for it? Is it to prepare yourselves to meet it—is it to qualify yourselves for its inquests, that you come to the house of God, and take a place at the table of Christ? Happy humility! happy sorrow, which weans us from this life and makes us sick of sin, for *here* speaks the Comforter in mercy saying, earth has no sorrow which Christ cannot cure.

## SERMON CCCCXX.

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### CHARGES TO THE RICH.

"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. 1. Tim. vi. 17, 19."

*Them that are rich*—that have abundance. Though we cannot define the term *riches* with any certainty, yet the term *abundance* will suffice for all practical purposes with such as candidly own the truth. To others we expect not to present a charge, even from God, with much hope of success.

*Charge them that are rich.* We say, as a judge of Israel once said to a king of Moab, "I have a message from God unto thee." And the command of God to us is, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." "To you, O men, do I call; and my voice is unto the sons of men." The Lord hath spoken—*Charge them that are rich.* The Lord does not say, "Let them alone, for there is no hope." But he says, *charge them*—evidently to do them good, and call them to the noble and god-like work of doing good. Had he determined absolutely to destroy them, he would send them no warning. But inasmuch as he says, *charge them*, we may believe it possible that they may obtain mercy. The fact also that a few rich men have obtained mercy encourages the hope, that a charge to the rich may not be in vain. And the words of the Saviour encourage us still farther, as he says, "That which is impossible with men, is possible with God." Hope, therefore, a little hope there is, of reaching them that are rich in this world. Hear, then, hear ye that are in prosperity, for God has not passed you by: it is possible that your souls may live—barely possible—so that good tidings may reach even to you, the most inaccessible of all human beings, of whom the God of truth once said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God." Despair not, however, for "with God all things are possible." He sends a message unto you.

But the charge must be delivered in the name of the Lord; it must be heard and regarded; and then your souls shall live, and your riches shall be a blessing to yourselves and to the world.

#### CHARGE THEM THAT ARE RICH IN THIS WORLD,

1. *That they be not high-minded.* Lofty thoughts do not become men, who have nothing but what they have received. Nor

does pride suit the condition of those who come from the dust, and claim affinity with worms, and soon return to dust again. It is unfit to assume lofty airs in comparison with others, when even a beggar may be more highly esteemed among the holy angels. Be not *high-minded*. Was not the highest among the angels condemned for his pride? Were not he and his host cast down into Tartarus to punish their pride? Are not men cautioned not to be lifted up with pride, lest they fall into the condemnation of the devil? Let the rich, therefore, *be not high-minded*. You condemn pride in others: condemn it also in yourselves. You know that humility is a precious gem, that sparkles with gentle lustre in every lowly bosom: let it be so splendid in yours as to outshine all the gems of your riches. *Be not high-minded*, "but be clothed with humility." You will find this robe set very easy and pleasantly upon you, though it be not very easy to put it on and to keep it on at all times. When you look round upon your houses and lands, your flocks and herds, your attendants and equipage, and, at the same time, know the abundance of your silver and gold, or the securities which you hold for the same, how can you, without deep humility, forbear to say, "my hand has gotten me this wealth?" How can you forbear comparing yourself with others, and thinking more highly of yourself on account of your superior possessions? Will you not flatter yourself because of your means of distinction? Will you not be liable to spurn from you the applicant for relief? As did once a man of the house of Caleb, who said to the servants of David, "There be many servants now-a-days, that break away every man from his master." How different was the conduct of the Prince of Uz, who said, "If I did despise the cause of my manservant, or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me; what then shall I do when God riseth up, and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me make him? And did not one fashion us? So do all the rich feel, when they are not high-minded. They consider themselves to be but dust and ashes, as Abraham said before God. They know that they are by nature children of wrath even as others. They know that all they possess belongs to the Lord, and that he alone maketh them to differ from others. And they know that they will soon lay their heads in the dust and to go to the world of spirits, as destitute and as naked as the poorest among mortals. They are therefore deeply humbled; and they are also jealous of themselves, lest they should be deceived by their abundance, and finally perish with their riches. To such, we know, the charge will be welcome, *be not high-minded*. How much soever some of the rich may spurn at the charge, given them in the name of the Lord, or be disposed to say, Let every man mind his own business; such as Job will welcome both the message and the messenger. With such, there may be some hope of prevailing in the charges which follow. And though

it is painful to part with such as remain high-minded, yet we have little hope in regard to them, and fear that they will not hear till the voice of the Master shall say, "Give account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward."

Again—**CHARGE THEM THAT ARE RICH IN THIS WORLD:**

2. *That they trust not in uncertain riches.*—Every one as naturally trusts in something as a vine clings to a tree. And as various objects present themselves to our reach we are prone to entwine our affections around them and trust in them. As "money answers all things," so are men prone to trust in it. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city." He has the means to build and to plant, to increase a profitable income and supply himself, his friends and dependants with all that money can purchase. If his fields bring forth abundantly, so that he has no place to bestow his fruits and his goods, he can pull down his barns and build greater. Then he can say, and he naturally will say, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: eat, drink and be merry." This is one way to trust in riches. But how soon was it said to him, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Does not such an example say to the rich man, *Trust not in uncertain riches?* Uncertain in this case, because the steward is suddenly put out of his stewardship, and leaves all his wealth unto others.

Another rich man "adds house to house and joins field to field," not so much for the purpose of furnishing a supply that he may eat, and drink and be merry, as for the purpose of accumulation. His insatiable desire increases with his means. And, as his object is not to enjoy, but to gain, he is like vessels always full, and always enlarging. All that he wants is not a supply, but a larger vessel. Of such an one Solomon says, "What hath a man of all his labor, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity." *Trust not in uncertain riches.* Uncertain in this case, because they do not allow a man to enjoy what he has for any valuable purpose, or to lay them out for any desirable end. "What profit is there, only in the beholding of them with his eyes?"

Instead of trusting in uncertain riches the charge is, to *trust in the living God*. We are dependent, and, in the nature of the case, we must trust in something. When we withdraw our confidence in one vanity it should not be that we may confide in another. Therefore should the rich, as well as others, *trust in the living God*. In regard to all things, and also at all times, should every one trust in the living God. In him trust the care of the soul and all our spiritual interests. But in this connexion we are to regard

specially the supply of all things, for which riches may be deemed a substitute. Instead of trusting in uncertain riches for such things as we need in this life, trust in the living God, who is the high Possessor of heaven and earth. How much more rational is it that we trust in the first cause of all things, than in secondary, and dependent causes! "Better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. Better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." The Saviour says, "Consider the lillies of the field—Consider the fowls of the air." "Take no thought." As the Apostle expresses it, "Be careful for nothing; but in all things by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." In the spirit of these divine counsels the pious Payson said with true faith, "I would ask God to give me a world if I needed it, just as readily as I would ask for a straw." How much more reasonable is it to trust for supplies in the exhaustless fountain, than to trust in a broken cistern; in infinite wisdom, than in human folly: in unchangeable goodness, than in the caprice of fallible man? It may be more difficult for the rich than for the poor to trust in the living God, because their houses and lands, their flocks and herds, their silver and gold, block up the way to God. But it is not less needful and essentially necessary. For they are as really dependent, and can do nothing without the living God. Hence must they break through all barriers, and overcome all obstacles, that they may come to the living God, and repose upon his paternal bosom, while they cast all their cares upon him—the unspeakable privilege of the poor and needy, and the only safety and security of the rich. Trust in the living God: for in so doing, your riches are just as available, while you are entrusted with them; and, if they leave you, or you leave them, the living God is your portion. Therefore trust in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.

Farther—CHARGE THEM THAT ARE RICH IN THIS WORLD.

3. *That they do good.*—It becomes us to say to the rich, ye are the Lord's stewards. "Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." Ye are not proprietors and lords, but stewards. Not a penny is your own absolutely, though entrusted with you for a season, to answer the purposes of the owner.

It has been well said by some one, that "the whole gospel is a vast system of giving." God, the Father, gave his only begotten Son. God, the Son, gave himself. God, the Father, gave the Spirit to the Son, when he ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for men. God, the Son, gives the Spirit to his disciples. God, the Holy Ghost, gives a new heart and all the Christian graces. So all things in this world are freely given to us of God; and to crown all, the Saviour says to his flock, "I give un-

to them eternal life, and they shall never perish." God's people partake of his Spirit, and they too are of the giving sort. As Jesus said unto his disciples, "Freely ye have received; freely give." And he was accustomed to say, "It is more blessed to give, than to receive." Need we marvel, then, that the converts, under the effusion of the Holy Spirit, were so ready to give? They sold their possessions and goods, and imparted them to all men, as every man had need." They did so because they were full of the Holy Ghost. For the same reason the churches of Macedonia were so liberal—the grace of God was bestowed upon them. In this system, every one is expected to give "as God has prospered him." The widow of her penury, casts in two mites; and all the rich, of their abundance, cast in much. And those who have neither silver nor gold, give such as they have. Some give themselves to be the Lord's servants, and wait on Him continually in the work of the gospel ministry. We have heard of a widow, who gave her three sons to this service; and of a father, who gave his son, as a foreign missionary, and the means to support him. The rich are therefore specially enjoined to do good, if they would belong to the Christian system. For although a man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned, and yet be destitute of charity; yet "if a man have this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Tell, if ye can, ye that are rich in this world, and shut up your bowels of compassion from the needy. We know not how such a thing can be, if the love of God be in you.

Not only are ye to do good, as all men should do, but as ye are rich in this world, ye are to be *rich in good works*. That is, be abundant in good works. One thing corresponds with another. To whom much is given, of them will much be required. The appropriate use of wealth is to be *rich in good works*. In such a world as this, while the rich look around and behold their abundance, they may look around and behold a multitude, that need their liberality. God has provided for them so that they shall never want for opportunity to do good. The poor, the idle, the vicious are under their eye. But they are the poorest of mankind, who know not the glorious gospel of the blessed God. With such a multitude you are not required to scatter abroad your Master's goods, as did the fabled Fortune, standing on a round stone, blind, throwing handfuls among the people. Such is not the christian method of doing good. But with eyes open, and mind discriminating must you, that would be rich in good works, bestow the bounties of your Lord. Relieve the pressing wants of the needy; provide employment for the idle; apply means to reclaim the vicious; and send forth the treasures of the gospel to such as are perishing for lack of knowledge.

As Christ commands us to preach the gospel to every creature,

and as man must go to preach and carry Bibles and other good books, so must they be sustained in the work. Thus the Apostles went forth "to turn the people from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God." While thus employed they were sustained, partly by their own manual labor, and partly by the contributions of the churches. The heathen then were as the heathen now; selfish, blind, sottish, and regardless of the wants of the ministers of Christ. Hence, Paul labored with his hands among the Corinthians, to sustain himself and his fellow laborers, when preaching the gospel to them at the first: but afterwards he said, "I robbed other churches to do you service." The Macedonians and others sent to his relief both at Corinth, and in other places. How blessed is the service now, when such as you are *rich in good works*, and sustain the faithful missionary, in his self-denial, his toil, his suffering, while wasting away his strength, his little all, and his life, to save the people that are ready to perish! Be ye *rich in good works*. And, if ye equal not the Lord Jesus Christ, "who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich;" yet, just in proportion as ye are *rich in good works*, do ye follow in his steps, and make those rich in the grace of salvation, who are now poor, and would perish but for your aid. Precious privilege do ye enjoy, in that ye may be able, by a wise and faithful use of your abundance, to aid in winning souls to Christ, through the labors of fainting missionaries, whom ye sustain.

Another beautiful quality does the Apostle depict in the character of such as are rich in good works—*Ready to distribute*. Following the apostolic direction to lay by in store, as God has prospered you, never can a call be made upon you at an unseasonable time. You need not expect the Master to call in person, but he sends his servants. And you can say, as said the Rev. John Newton, "not a man knocks at my door, but I think that God sent him. And if he calls for aid in the Master's cause, he will find you ready. You will not say, 'go, and call again.'" But you will cheer both his heart and your own, by a ready distribution of so much as you think and he thinks the Master requires for that particular object. How beautiful the expression, *Ready to distribute*.

But there is another expression which is no less beautiful and is found often in connexion with the offerings made for the service of the Lord—*Willing to communicate*. In the wilderness God invited such as were *willing*. David, after stating to his people that he had given, because he had set his affection to the house of his God, asked, "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" And on the day of pentecost and afterwards under the influence of the Holy Ghost, how cheerfully did the people offer their substance for the relief of the needy! So, if you be rich in good works, and possess all the qualities, which the Lord requires and loves, you will be *willing to communicate*. You will

not be angry, or put on a forbidding air; but you will win the love of God and man by cheerfulness. "For the Lord loveth a cheerful giver." This is the way to be **RICH IN GOOD WORKS**; ever to give abundantly, readily and willingly. Thus every donation will increase "the riches of your liberality."

Nor is this all.—**CHARGE THEM THAT ARE RICH IN THIS WORLD.**

4. *That they lay up in store for themselves a good foundation.*

Beloved, God does not intend that you, who are rich in this world, should receive all your good things here. He would have you enjoy a richer treasure, dwell in more splendid palaces, feast upon more delicious food, be enrobed in more elegant apparel, be engaged in more magnificent operations, and enjoy better company and a sweeter felicity. And that you may not be ruined by your abundance, but turn all to the best account, he condescends to give you his heavenly counsel. Use not all now, but lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come, that ye may lay hold on eternal life.

The time to come is the eternal world. Millions of ages after the close of this earthly state, and the burning of this world, the time to come will be—when not an atom shall remain of your riches in this world, then will you need,

*A good foundation.*—"A certain good; happiness firm and stable." Are there those who seek a *good foundation*, on which their surplus treasures may rest in this world? Do they enquire about public stocks? Do they ask, what stocks have the best foundation? Such inquiries are judicious: for no man wishes to invest money in stocks, which are liable to explode in a few days—and, many wish to invest all their property in real estate. For lands will not make wings and fly away, while buildings are consumed, and banking institutions fail. So God orders us to charge the rich to *lay up for themselves in store a good foundation against the time to come.* A good foundation indeed, in a world which shall never pass away! In a world, "where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Of this the Apostle Peter says, "It is an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

*Laying up in store.*—It is not wrong to lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come. Only let the time be eternity, and the foundation "a certain good, happiness firm and stable."—Lay up in store as much as possible. But how is this to be done?

We answer, by the use you make of your riches. As said the

Savior "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." In order to this there must be exchanges; for your gold and silver, and houses and lands, and such other items of wealth as are current and available in this world, will not pass in heaven. Not because they, who dwell in that better country, do not know the value of your earthly treasures, like the savage islander, who valued a knife more than a twenty thousand pound bank note: but because they know too well the inferior quality of your treasures. God is indeed bringing the glory and honor of the nations into his holy city, New Jerusalem; but as he has no need there of such treasures as constitute your wealth here, it will be of no use to think of presenting any thing you have in its present form. But as a man, going into a foreign country, makes exchanges and procures money, which is current in that country; so must the rich do, who would lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come. They must now be negotiating exchanges. As it is written, "He that hath pity on the poor, lendeth unto the Lord, and that, which he hath given, will he pay him again." Prov. 19, 17. This is the method of effecting exchanges between earth and heaven. The Lord, the owner of all you have as stewards, promises to pay you again, in the currency of heaven, all that you expend, according to his will, in showing mercy to the poor, and the perishing in this world. Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, preach the gospel to the destitute, relieve all manner of distress, or give even a cup of cold water to any one out of regard to Christ, and you will by no means lose your reward. Be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, and, when Christ comes, he will pay you again "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over."—This is the promise of God. If you like the security you will engage largely and liberally and immediately in the work of negotiating exchanges, so that you may *lay hold on eternal life*. So are we to encourage the rich to do, not as the sole object at which they should aim. For they, as well as others, are bound to glorify God as their supreme end, and love their neighbour as themselves. But they may seek their own good too, even eternal life. And though they are not to purchase eternal life, but receive it as a free gift through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; yet, as they are entrusted with their Lord's goods, they must use them according to his will, or they will fail of eternal life. So did a rich young man once, who enquired very earnestly and respectfully of Jesus, what shall I do that I may have eternal life? But when Jesus told him to sell all he had and give to the poor, the young man went away sorrowful.

The expression in the text denotes danger—that *they may lay hold on eternal life*—the danger is of failing to lay hold. As when an object is presented to us and comes within our reach, but we are so heedless, or rebellious, or have our hands so full of other things,

that we fail of seizing it at *once*, when we may, and thus lose it for ever. So is eternal life to every one, but especially to the rich. God in the offers of his grace, presents eternal life to every one of us through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and says, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able." But what does he say to the rich?—Well were the disciples astonished above measure, when he said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." In the parable of the sower he gives the reason—"The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." Hence does he represent the salvation of the rich as a *bare possibility*. "It is impossible with men; but with God all things are possible." Hence the need of charging the rich to use their wealth so that they may *lay hold on eternal life*. We are not to tell them to expect eternal life on any conditions different from other men. We promise them not eternal life, because they use wealth liberally, or even "if the give all their goods to feed the poor." On the contrary, they have a more difficult task than other men. For while they must be born again, or not enter into the kingdom of God; and repent, or perish; and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, or never see life: they are encompassed with the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things, which render it next to impossible that they should ever be saved. They must deny themselves in the midst of all the means of gratification. They must crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, while their abundance, their friends and the cares of this world combine to pamper the flesh with its affections and lusts. They must look at the things, which are not seen, through the splendour which cluster thick around them, and dazzle their eyes. They must hear the still, small voice of God, calling to their conscience, amid the clamors of the gay, the thoughtless, and the pleasure-loving world. And, "while worldly fancy feeds on golden dreams," and flatters them that "to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant," and another time, "a more convenient season."—Alas! Alas! how can the rich *lay hold on eternal life*? Is it possible for them with their eyes, ears, hands and heart full, and more still pressing for their acceptance, to lay hold on an object, so difficult to seize, and to hold, as eternal life? Will they be induced to part with all they have, if the Lord demand it? How can they bear to hear him say to them as to the lovely young man, referred to before, "Go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come take up the cross and follow me."—"He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions"—*great possessions!* He kept his great possessions for a season, but lost his soul for ever. Surely, if any in a christian land need our sympathy, they that are rich need it. Their souls are as *precious* as

the souls of others. Others are in danger and can be saved with great difficulty. What then will become of the rich? They can hardly be saved. The Lord Jesus pitied, while he warned them. The apostle, Paul, warned them, and urged Timothy to charge them to lay hold on eternal life. The apostle, James, cried out to them, saying, "Weep and howl!" O, my soul, "Envy not the rich," but as God bids, charge them not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

If you are unconverted, your wealth is "a wall to keep you out of heaven." It is a car, to roll you easily and speedily down to hell. Would you ever be converted, now receive the Lord Jesus gladly as did Zacheus. Then, like him, quietly give the half of your goods to be rich in good works, or some proportion equally acceptable to God. And, if you have gained any thing unjustly, be prompt in making restitution. Thus will the Lord say of you, as he did of him, "This day is salvation come to this house."

If you profess to be Christians, and yet are not possessed of the spirit enjoined in the text, we leave you with the words of the Apostle James, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

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### POINTING THE ARROWS.

The celestial armory is well supplied with weapons. They are not carnal but spiritual. They are of etherial mould, and of divine workmanship.—When well directed, they pierce the heart and wound the conscience. They are the arrows of the Almighty and when they are made to strike fast in the soul, their wounds are deep, their poison drinketh up the spirits of men, and constrains them in the agony of their aching hearts to hasten to the Great Physician for balm to heal their wounds. Unlike all other arrows and wounds, they have a blessed design and wonderful efficacy.

There is a class of men—soldiers of the cross—who are specially appointed to this celestial archery, whose solemn business it is to go in the name of heaven's King to his armory, where are stores of

inexhaustible abundance laid up ready for use, and to select and draw out the sharpest, choicest arrows, and to use them with divinest skill. Some of these archers are expert marksmen. They are so chiefly in their choice of the arrows. They show an admirable acquaintance with the armory, and select with great care and labor those weapons which are best suited to do execution. They desire above all things to acquit themselves as soldiers of the cross, and gain the approbation of the Great Captain of salvation.

Some years ago there lived a very skilful archer. His name was Payson. He was mighty in handling spiritual weapons. He was greatly familiar with the celestial armory. You would think he had spent all his days in examining the etherial temper and divine workmanship of the weapons in that inexhaustible storehouse. He could select and draw out the arrows with wonderful skill. When he drew his bow, the arrows flew thick around, and there are many still alive who remember his skill, and how they were sorely wounded, and have been joyfully healed. But even he, with all his skill, often confessed his impotence. There seemed to be something wanting. He felt it, and mourned over it, with deep feeling, and with a heart gushing with sorrow. He seems at length to have discovered the true cause and left it on record. We read it the other day, and such is its almost immeasurable importance, that we copy it for the serious and prayerful consideration of the many whom it concerns. He said, "It will be found, I doubt not, in the coming world, that ministers had much less share in the success which attended their labors than is now supposed. It will be found, that if they drew the bow, the prayers of christians pointed and guided the arrow." If, then, the gospel fails of success in any church, if there are no revivals, no conversions, no inquiring sinners, no presence and power of the Spirit, no quickening influence, no effects from the weapons of truth which fly from the archer's quiver from Sabbath to Sabbath, let the Christians in that church lay it to heart, that it is because their prayers do not "point and guide the arrows." Here, perhaps, may be found the sad and guilty cause for the long and gloomy dearth of revivals which now afflicts the churches of our land.

